

PLANS FOR A FINER CITY...

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REDEVELOPMENT PUBLIC HOUSING

REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

DEFINITION AND SCOPE

Deterioration of the older central portion of the city is a widely recognized fact. This deterioration is of twofold character:

1. On the one hand it represents the obsolescent decay of individual structures.
2. On the other it represents the deterioration of the whole environment, intrusion of commerce, industry and traffic and other detracting influences into older residential areas.

There are undoubtedly some situations in which this deterioration may be checked by rebuilding or renovation of individual buildings, or by minor street changes or public improvements. Partial renovation or improvement of a neighborhood is referred to as *rehabilitation*.

In some areas individual buildings are so badly deteriorated, and the general environment so blighted that the areas must be cleared, replanned and rebuilt in a wholesale manner. This process of clearance and rebuilding is known as *redevelopment*. The redevelopment plan refers to those areas in the city which are now or will in the future be ripe for rebuilding.

OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURE

The redevelopment plan has three aspects:

1. To determine the areas for clearance and rebuilding.
2. To establish what use these areas are most suited to under the Master Plan, and their relation to expressways, thoroughfares, recreation areas or other public improvements.
3. To determine the boundaries of sites suitable for rebuilding.

There are no sharply defined conditions which establish the need for rebuilding, but rather the accumulation of many factors, frequently interacting upon each other. These include the deterioration and obsolescence of individual structures, the mixture of industry and commerce with residential neighborhoods and a street pattern which encourages through traffic on residential streets.

The *redevelopment* plan shows three uses to which the worst blighted areas are suited: residential rebuilding, recreation and industrial development.

Residential

The framework of neighborhoods is the first controlling factor in outlining sites for residential rebuilding. The boundaries, the local street pattern and playground or other local improvements must be based on the needs of the neighborhood as a whole.

Thoroughfares or expressways are obvious boundaries for rebuilding areas. The replanning of an area for rebuilding can obviously not be carried out if rebuilding sites either straddle or fall short of major thoroughfares as external boundaries. In the first situation the project would be broken into two fragments. In the second it would be rimmed by blocks of old houses and stores in deteriorated condition.

The practice of rebuilding the core of a slum area and leaving a fringe of unreconstructed commercial and apartment buildings along a major thoroughfare has been found quite unsatisfactory. Without a “front door” on a major thoroughfare, residents must pass through blight to get to their homes in the rebuilt area. Surrounded by deterioration and slums the redevelopment area fails to create a new environment.

However, it does not follow that the neighborhood must itself be the building unit. In general neighborhoods are larger areas than can be conveniently cleared and rebuilt as a single operation. Both the experience of the federal low-rent housing program and the projects advanced by private builders suggest units of a smaller scale. For this reason each neighborhood has been divided into several building sites each containing several city blocks. These rebuilding units may be bounded by local park strips, secondary thoroughfares or by the thoroughfares, expressways or large recreation areas as shown in the Master Plan.

The residential redevelopment area consists of 2,450 gross acres, or much of eleven residential neighborhoods within the Boulevard. Excluding streets and alleys the residential areas contain approximately 1,950 acres to be acquired and cleared.

Recreation

Some portions of the areas to be cleared for redevelopment will be needed for recreational purposes. The recreation plan shows precise locations of playfields and parks which are needed.

The redevelopment plan includes as “To be developed for public recreation purposes” those sites in the recreation plan which are within areas suitable for clearance and redevelopment.

Industrial Redevelopment

Clearance for industrial redevelopment presents several problems distinctly different from residential redevelopment.

The major difference is that the areas to be rebuilt are already partially in industrial use. Approximately one-half of the 1,350 acres, excluding streets in the clearance districts, in the plan has industrial structures which are appropriate to remain. Some existing industries

are ready to expand at their present sites if land can be made available.

Of the remaining land in the industrial districts, 120 acres is vacant and 550 acres are used for residential purposes. The pockets of housing in the industrial districts represent the net area to be cleared. These houses and apartments are blighted in their present surroundings, but it will inflict an unnecessary hardship on these residents and owners to permit a further changeover without providing some procedure to speed up the process. Simply to zone these areas for industry is to make changeover inevitable from the householders standpoint, yet it does not materially help the industrialists to assemble a site large enough for his purposes.

Neither is the position of the householder protected if the city assists industrial expansion by piecemeal condemnation. Until all houses are cleared the remaining householders are in a progressively worse position from each changeover.

From the standpoint of the industrialist, the district into which he is moving should have:

Sites of a size suitable for present building and later expansion if needed.

Access from major thoroughfares without bottlenecks of narrow residential streets.

Possibility of railroad siding in some cases.

For these reasons, industrial districts have been laid out on an assumption that all non-industrial buildings in a site will be acquired and cleared more or less as a simultaneous operation, and that necessary local street and railroad improvements will be made as an incidental part of the site preparation.

Since the cleared areas will normally be used not by a single but by several different industries operating independently, there is little likelihood that whole redevelopment areas will be absorbed immediately upon clearance. The redevelopment agency must undertake the operation in the expectation that portions of a redevelopment area must be held until industries can utilize them.

EXPLANATION OF THE MAP

The redevelopment map shows clearance areas suitable for residential and industrial use. Dark tan areas represent separate residential clearance areas. Areas suitable for industrial use are shown by light tan. Recreation areas are shown by a stiple pattern. Boundaries for these separate districts represent thoroughfares, expressways or other features in the Master Plan which form appropriate termini for clearance operations.

PUBLIC HOUSING SITES

The Detroit Housing Commission operates 5071 permanent dwelling units constructed to provide shelter for low income families unable to secure adequate housing for a rental which they can afford.

The public housing developments in Detroit have been constructed under PWA and provisions of the Wagner Act of 1937 which provides federal assistance in financing and management. Future developments will be carried out under provisions of the Housing Act of 1949.

FACTORS GOVERNING THE LOCATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING

Since public housing is a residential use of land, it has in general the same location requirements of any residential development. Sites should be located in sections which will remain permanently good areas for living. They should be accessible to schools, recreation areas, shopping centers and other community services. They should be easily accessible by public transport to places of employment.

Beyond these general conditions, the management practice of the Detroit Housing Commission establishes certain special requirements:

1. Dwellings are grouped in developments of 200 units or more.
2. Structures are usually *terraces* or *apartments*.
3. The gridiron street system is usually modified to reduce area in street, to provide space for playgrounds, and to permit better orientation of buildings.

These practices involve choice of relatively large sites. When

developments are to be located in clearance areas these sites should be located so that internal streets may be closed without impairing traffic circulation. In relation to the Master Plan, this requirement means that any given development site should be developed as an integral part of the neighborhood within which it lies, rather than as a separate entity with separate schools or playgrounds.

Since a project area is normally smaller in area than an entire neighborhood, it is usually desirable to have it border on a major thoroughfare. Access from project local streets to the major thoroughfare permits direct discharge of traffic onto the thoroughfare without increasing the traffic movements through the rest of the neighborhood.

In clearance areas, it has also been found desirable to front new developments on thoroughfares so that they can be reached without passing through blighted or non-residential districts. Rebuilding can be more effective in establishing a new character to the central portions of the city if the rebuilding is started at clearly marked boundaries and proceeds progressively to contiguous area.

EXPLANATION OF THE MAP

The accompanying map shows the sites of existing permanent public housing developments and two new sites under acquisition for development by the city. Sites already developed or under construction are shown in solid color; undeveloped sites in a lighter shade.

The map does not include location of temporary housing which is subject to removal.

THE PLAN		
<i>To be Continued</i>		<i>Number of Dwelling Units</i>
1-1	Brewster Homes	943
1-2	Frederick Douglass Apartments (Under Construction)	1,000
2-1	Edward Jeffries Homes (Under Construction)	2,172
7-1	Parkside Homes	1,134
9-1	Charles Terrace	440
9-2	Sojourner Truth Homes	200
12-1	John W. Smith Homes	210
13-1	S. James Herman Gardens	2,150
<i>Proposed Developments</i>		
1-3	Site bounded by Hastings, Canfield proposed Hastings expressway, Winder, Brush, Mack and Beaubien	5,000
1-4	Site bounded by Jay, St. Aubin, Maple Chene, Larned and Grand Trunk Railroad	3,874